

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANJUL 01573 141417Z

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FM AMEMBASSY BANJUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4865

INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANJUL 1573

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV PDIP GA

SUBJ: GAMBIAN REPRESENTATION IN US

REF: (A) STATE 262858 (B) DAKAR 7332 (C) BANJUL 1554

1. PRESIDENT JAWARA CALLED IN CHARGE ON NOV 11 TO DISCUSS HIS GOVERNMENT'S DESIRE TO ESTABLISH A PERMANENT PRESENCE IN UNITED STATES. PRESIDENT SAID PROPOSAL IS RECEIVING HIS ACTIVE CONSIDERATION AND GOTG HOPES TO OPEN US OFFICE IN 1978. CANDIDLY, HE ADMITTED THAT ONLY MAJOR PROBLEM IS ENORMOUS COST (IN GAMBIAN BUDGETARY TERMS) THAT ESTABLISHING NEW MISSION WOULD ENTAIL.

2. PRESIDENT ASKED CHARGE TO CONVEY TO DEPARTMENT HIS HOPE THAT USG COULD FIND SOME WAY TO HELP GOTG MEET COSTS OF ACQUIRING OR LEASING MISSION PROPERTY. HE EXPLAINED THAT GAMBIAN GOVERNMENT HAD ARRANGED VERY FAVORABLE LONG-TERM LEASE FOR US RESIDENCE IN BANJUL IN 1968, IN HOPE THAT THIS WOULD MAKE POSSIBLE RECIPROCAL GESTURE WHEN GOTG PREPARED TO ESTABLISH IN US. CHARGE DISCUSSED USUAL CAVEATS AND BASIC US POLICY CONCERNING RECIPROCITY OF THIS NATURE. HE EXPLAINED LEGAL PROBLEMS AND CONGRESSIONAL RESTRAINTS, BUT NONETHELESS PROMISED TO FORWARD PRESIDENTIAL REQUEST.

3. IN DISCUSSING ALTERNATIVES, PRESIDENT SAID VARIOUS OPTIONS
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BANJUL 01573 141417Z

OUTLINED IN CHARGE'S EARLIER DISCUSSION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER (REFS A AND B) WOULD BE FULLY CONSIDERED. HE FURTHER STATED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT MIGHT CLOSE ONE OR TWO OF ITS PRESENT DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN ORDER TO OPEN IN US. PRESIDENT SEEMS TO BE THINKING MAINLY IN TERMS OF ONE ACCREDITED DIPLOMAT WHO WOULD BE BOTH AMBASSADOR TO US AND UN PERM REP, WITH MINIMAL OFFICE IN EITHER NEW YORK OR WASHINGTON, AND ESTABLISHED MISSION

IN OTHER.

4. CLEARLY, ECONOMIC FACTOR IS KEY TO RESOLVING QUESTION OF GAMBIAN REPRESENTATION IN US. IN CARRYING OUT INSTRUCTIONS (REF A), CHARGE HAS CAUSED GOTG AT HIGHEST LEVEL TO REFOCUS ITS ATTENTION ON ACCREDITATION PROBLEM. WHILE REALIZING DIFFICULTIES POSED BY PRESIDENT'S REQUEST FOR US ASSISTANCE TO HELP ESTABLISH THIS MISSION, DEPARTMENT SHOULD GIVE FURTHER LOOK AT POSSIBLE WAYS IN WHICH WE COULD BE HELPFUL. DEPARTMENT SHOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET FOR GAMBIAN GOVERNMENT THIS YEAR IS APPROXIMATELY DOLS 25 MILLION. IN A SENSE, BY OUR INSISTENCE, WE HAVE BROUGHT THIS ISSUE UPON OURSELVES.

5. IN FINAL COMMENT TO CHARGE, PRESIDENT INQUIRED ABOUT INVITATION EXTENDED TO HIM BY PAN-AFRICAN UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE (REF C), WITH CLEAR INDICATION THAT HE MIGHT ACCEPT IF ORGANIZATION IS WORTHWHILE. EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE EARLY RESPONSE TO REF C SO THAT PRESIDENT MAY BE ADVISED ACCORDINGLY. WYGANT

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